



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Phil Steele, or Phil.Steele@noaa.gov
727/570-5305, FAX 727/570-5583
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

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GAG, RED GROUPER, AND BLACK GROUPER COMMERCIAL FISHERIES IN GULF OF MEXICO FEDERAL WATERS WILL CLOSE FEBRUARY 15 UNTIL MARCH 15, 2005

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) announces that from February 15 until March 15, 2005, the sale or purchase of gag, red grouper, or black grouper harvested from Gulf federal waters is prohibited, and no person aboard a vessel for which a valid federal commercial Gulf reef fish permit has been issued may possess these species in the Gulf regardless of where harvested. The operator of a vessel with a valid federal commercial Gulf reef fish permit having gag, red grouper, or black grouper aboard must have landed and sold such gag, red grouper, or black grouper prior to 12:01 a.m. local time, February 15, 2005. This prohibition on sale/purchase does not apply to gag, red grouper, or black grouper that were harvested, landed ashore, and sold prior to February 15 and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor. Additionally, during the closure, the recreational bag and possession limits of gag, red grouper, and black grouper aboard those vessels, which have been issued a valid federal commercial Gulf reef, fish permit is zero.

A person aboard a vessel for which the federal permit indicates both charter vessel/headboat for Gulf reef fish and commercial Gulf reef fish may continue to retain gag, red grouper, and black grouper under the recreational bag and possession

limit, provided the vessel is operating as a charter vessel or headboat. Reef fish caught under the recreational bag limit may not be sold. The commercial fishery will reopen at 12:01 a.m. on March 15, 2005.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving the nations living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management, and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to customers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

This and other news releases are available on the SERO homepage at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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Southeast Regional Office, F/SER24
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